

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 LAGOS 05449 020725Z

ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-20

IO-14 AID-05 /094 W

-----127822 020731Z /13

R 011435Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8222

INFO AMCONSUL IBADAN

AMCONSUL KADUNA

USICA WASHDC

UNCLAS LAGOS 05449

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, NI

SUBJECT: "BLACK FRIDAY": PRESS COMMENTARY

REF: LAGOS 5400

1. LOCAL MEDIA HAVE EXPRESSED GRAVE CONCERN OVER THE STUDENT CRISIS OF THE LAST TWO WEEKS AND THE RIOTS ON FRIDAY, APRIL 29. HEADLINES IN VARIOUS PAPERS SUMMARIZED THEIR VIEWS: "STUDENTS' RIOTS MUST CEASE NOW\* (PUNCH); "APPALLING DESTRUCTION" (NEW NIGERIAN)" ("IN THE INTEREST OF THE NATION" (SUNDAY TIMES).

2. THE PUNCH APRIL 30 CALLED ON ALL NIGERIAN STUDENTS TO SEEK ORDER AND "STOP BEHAVING LIKE SPOILED BRATS.... WHATEVER VALIDITY THE STUDENTS MAY HAVE HAD FOR PRESTING AT THE START, THEY ARE FAST ERODING AWAY AND REPLACING THEM WITH THE PEOPLE'S ANIMOSITY AND WRATH." RE COL. ALI, COMMISSIONER FOR EDUCATION, PUNCH SAID HE "HAS DISPLAYED ENOUGH INEPTITUDE...TO BE POSTED TO CALMER HOSPITALS\* BUT COL. ALI IS A MILITARY (OFFICER) AND THE INITIATIVE UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 LAGOS 05449 020725Z

TO REMOVE HIM BELONGS TO THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT....BY THE STUDENTS' PRESENT RECKLESS EXCESSES THEY ARE ALIENATING THE SYMPATHY OF THE ONLY AUTHORITY THAT (CAN) SEND THE BUNGLING COMMISSIONER AWAY."

3. THE SUNDAY TIMES HAD TWO EDITORIALS. UNDER THE HEADLINE "CAUSE FOR CONCERN" THE TIMES SAID, "THE

FRIGHTENING PROPORTION WHICH THE VARSITY FEES CRISIS HAS ASSUMED IN THE LAST 48 HOURS MUST BE A CAUSE FOR CONCERN TO ALL.....MATTERS HAVE TRULY GONE BEYOND THE FORMER NUNS, AS UNION OFFICIALS WOULD THEMSELVES TESTIFY.....THE END RESULT OF A CONTINUING STATE OF DISORDER IS TOO GRIM TO CONTEMPLATE. THAT'S WHY THE VANDALS MUST SEE REASON. AND WHY ALL THIS MUST STOP."

4. UNDER THE HEADLINE "IN THE INTEREST OF THE NATION" THE SUNDAY TIMES ALSO SAID, "THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS TO ACCEPT THAT THERE IS A GENUINE FEELING ON THE PART OF THE PUBLIC NOT ONLY AGAINST THE DEATH OF STUDENTS BUT ALSO AGAINST THE INCREASE IN FEES.... BUT IT DOES ALSO APPEAR THAT WITH THE EFFORTS WHICH HAVE BEEN PUT INTO SHOWING THE STRENGTH OF THE OPPOSITION TO THE NEW FEES THE POINT HAS BEEN MADE, AND THE STAGE REACHED WHEN CALMER APPROACHES ARE NOW DESIRABLE.....IN THE END, THERE MUST STILL BE A MEETING

MEETING OF MINDS THAT  
T WILL BRING A LASTING END TO  
THE TRAGIC EVENTS OF THE PAST DAYS. THE COUNTRY MUST SEE PEACE, UNDER MEASURES THAT ARE JUST. THAT IS WHY FRAYED TEMPERS MUST COOL, WHY CONFRONTATION MUST GIVE WAY TO DIALOGUE, WHY THE LARGER INTERESTS OF THE  
UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 LAGOS 05449 020725Z

NATION MUST NOW BE OUR OVERRIDING CONSIDERATION."

5. NEW NIGERIAN MAY 1 SAID, "THERE IS NO JUSTIFICATION FOR THE MINDLESS DESTRUCTION, PERPETRATED AT IFE, IBADAN AND LAGOS ON THE WEEKEND BY SOME DASTARDLY CHARACTERS....WHEN THE STUDENT PROTEST BEGAN, WE ON THE NEW NIGERIAN TOOK A SYMPATHETIC VIEW OF THE STUDENT CAUSE...BUT THE PRESENT TURN OF EVENTS, ESPECIALLY IN LAGOS, IS UNACCEPTABLE IN ANY DECENT SOCIETY. THE STUDENTS OPENED THE FLOOD GATES FOR HOOLIGANS TO TERRORIZE THE PUBLIC AND DESTROY PRIVATE AND PUBLIC PROPERTY....WE SHOULD ALL RISE TO THE OCCASION AND HELP THE AUTHORITIES TO MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER AND TO ENSURE SAFETY OF LIFE AND PROPERTY."

6. THE DAILY TIMES OF APRIL 29 ALSO CARRIED AN EDITORIAL WHICH WHILE NOT REFERRING DIRECTLY TO THE FRIDAY RIOTS MADE AN APPEAL BASED ON THE EVENTS OF THE LAST TWO WEEKS ENTITLED "UNTIDY VIRTUES":  
"NIGERIANS ARE BRUTISH AND NASTY. THEY ARE CONTENTIOUS AND CANTANKEROUS. THEY ARE IRREVERENT. AND THEY ARE UNGOVERNABLE. ALL THIS IS TRUE....WE ARE (ALSO)

AN INTENSELY POLITICAL PEOPLE....THERE IS EVERY REASON  
TO WELCOME THE ROBUSTNESS WITH WHICH CITIZENS HAVE  
JOINED BATTLE IN RECENT CONTROVERSIES....AND GIVEN  
THE TENDENCY TOWARDS AUTHORITARIAN RULE, THE NIGERIAN  
REALITY, UNTIDY THOUGH IT MAY BE, IS NEVERTHELESS ONE  
FOR WHICH WE MUST CONSIDER OURSELVES EXCEPTIONALLY  
FORTUNATE....OUR GREATEST DANGER (LIES) IN BELIEVING  
THAT THE REPUBLIC HAVING BEEN SO SORELY TRIED IN  
THE PAST, CAN WITHSTAND ANY SIEGE. IT CANNOT....IN  
RECENT DAYS, WE HAVE STRETCHED ITS RESILIENCE TO  
OMINOUS LIMITS....CITIZENS MAY OPPOSE, AND INDEED  
MUST OPPOSE THE STATE AND ITS AGENT WHENEVER THEY  
FEEL COMPELLED TO DO SO. BUT THEY MAY NOT SEE IN  
THIS A CALL TO WANTON ACTS OF DESTRUCTIVE HEROISM.  
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PAGE 04 LAGOS 05449 020725Z

VIOLENCE MAY BE LIBERATING, BUT IT MUST NOT BE SEEN  
AS LIBERATING THE CITIZEN FROM HIS CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY....  
IT IS EASILY TO SIT AND COUNT THE COSTS OF OUR  
RECENT BATTLES. AND IN DOING SO WE MUST NEVER FORGET  
HOW EASILY OUR VIRTUES, OUR ENERGIES, OUR IRREVERENCE  
AND OUR FERVOUR COULD BECOME THE VERY SOURCE OF  
OUR DESTRUCTION."  
WYMAN

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** PRESS COMMENTS, CIVIL DISORDERS, STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 01 may 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** n/a  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:**  
**Disposition Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
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**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D780186-0492  
**Format:** TEL  
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**Image Path:**  
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**Office:** ACTION AF  
**Original Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
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**Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
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**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Release Date:** N/A  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**SAS ID:** 2531879  
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**Status:** NATIVE  
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**Type:** TE  
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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014